



Inter-Agency Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) Situation Update Operational Environment in Lebanon (January-May 2021)

Lebanon is facing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis that has undermined the subsistence capacity of already vulnerable Lebanese and refugees in Lebanon. Individuals and families are falling deeper into poverty due to high inflation, rising food prices and loss of income. The COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated the situation by reducing people’s access to food, livelihood opportunities and other basic services.

Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) partners are working to maintain access to life-saving protection and assistance services, while respecting necessary precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

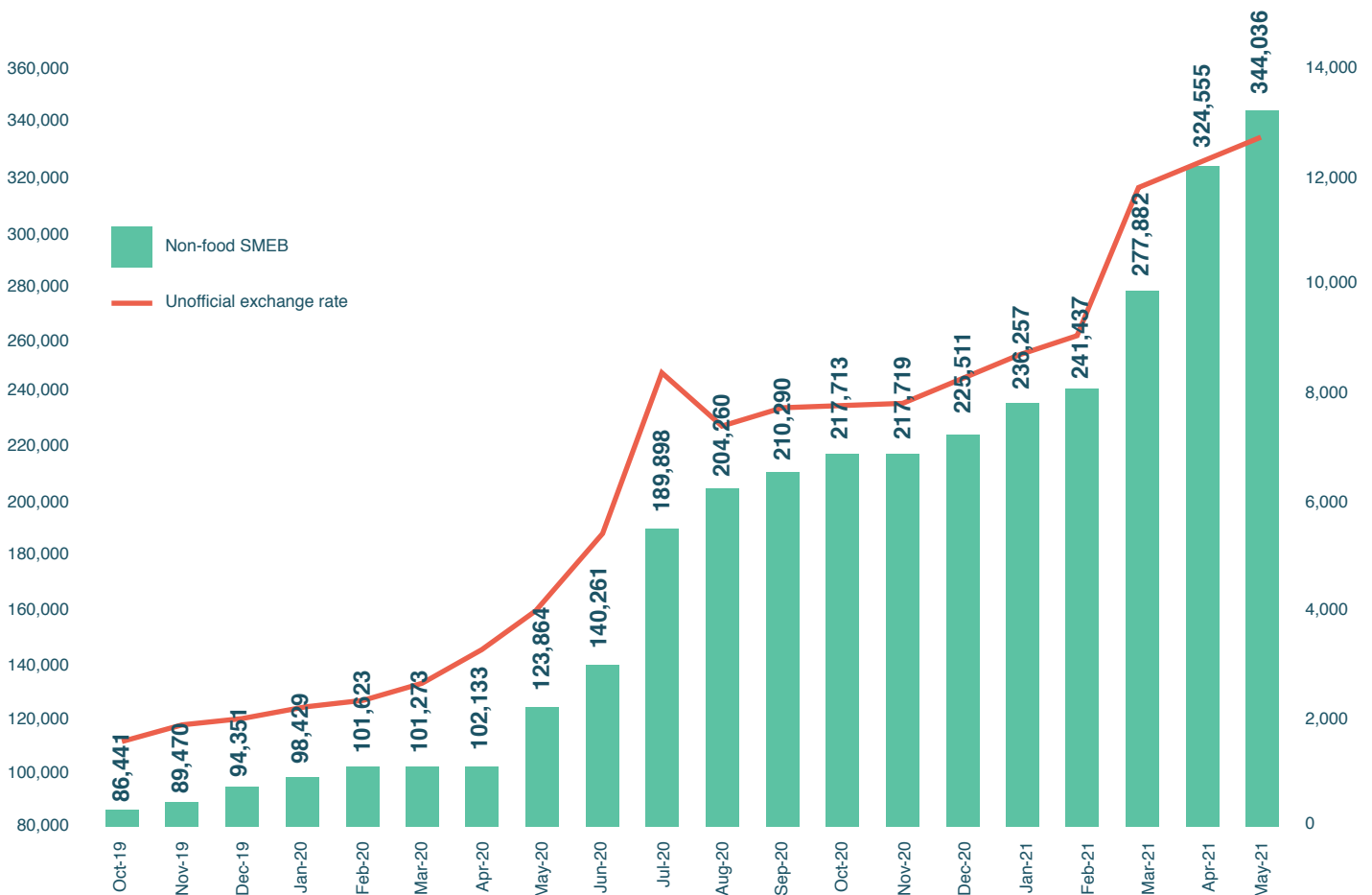
DEEPENING SOCIO-ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES

From January to May, the socio-economic situation continued to deteriorate compounded by COVID-19 related lockdowns, leading to major unmet needs across all LCRP target populations (vulnerable Lebanese, displaced Syrians, Palestine refugees, other refugees and migrants). Between January and March 2021 (Q1 2021), there were 272,244 calls to the UNHCR-WFP Call Centre related to requests for cash and food assistance, a 16% increase compared to Q1 2020.¹ In March 2021, when asked about their three priority needs, refugee families reported: 88% need assistance in accessing food, 86% need assistance to pay for rent, 32% need assistance to cover winter-related needs, 32% need assistance to pay for healthcare costs, 29% need assistance to

buy basic items for children, 10% need assistance for access to medicine.² The Non-Food Items Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which includes a list of nine basic hygiene items, blankets, cooking gas and other services/needs such as communications, transportation, education or health costs, rent, debt repayment, among others, has reached 1,025,000 LBP/ Month in May 2021 (source: Microsoft Power BI).³ The basket of 12 commodities (hygiene items, blankets, and cooking gas), excluding the services component of the SMEB, increased by 6% between April and May 2021. Between October 2019 and May 2021, the basket increased by 298%.

Non-food Item SMEB, excluding services, cost in LBP

Source:WFP (2021) national BA working group 24 June.



¹ Reported by UNHCR-WFP Call Centre.

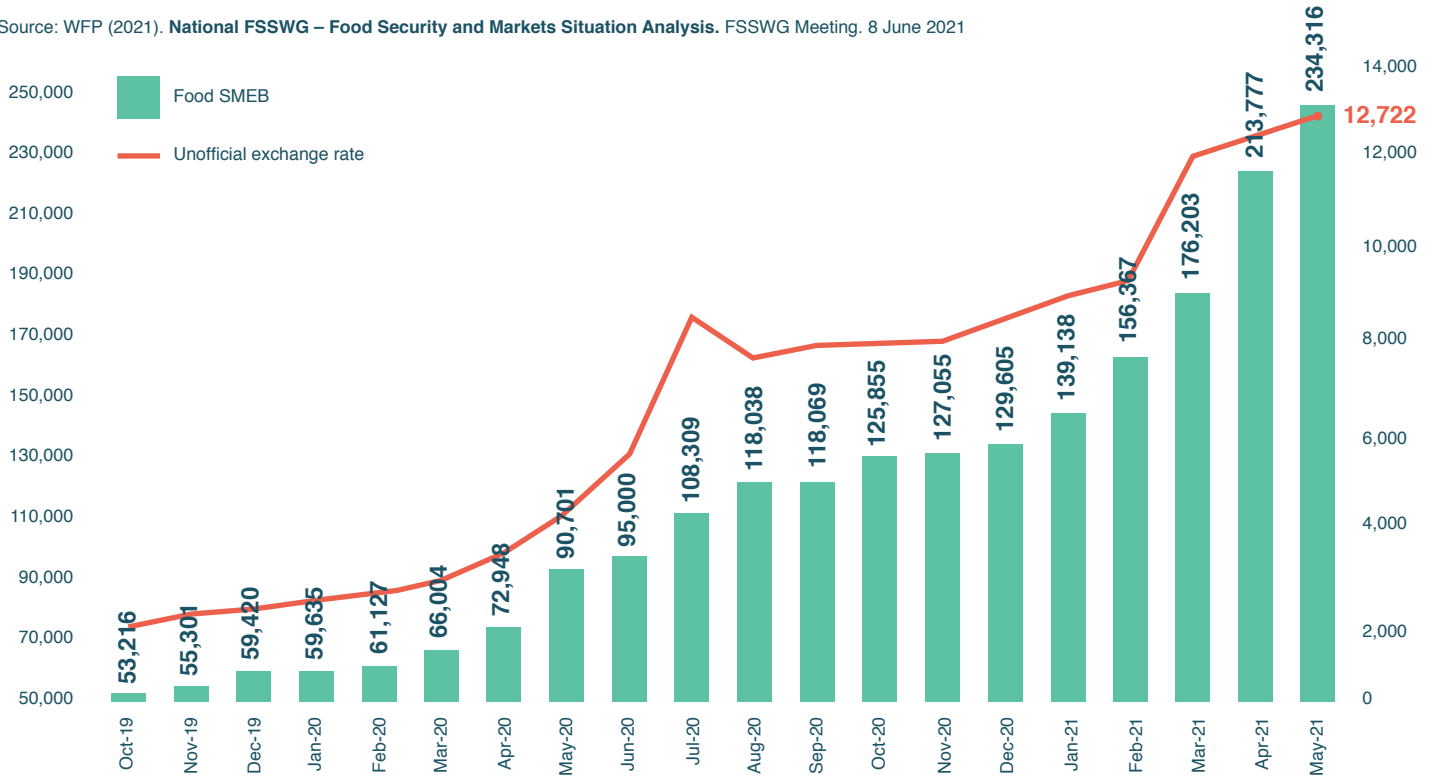
² UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring March 2021. Presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on April 16, 2021

³ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYmYzNTVhZWVhZmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9&pageName=ReportSection>.

INCREASING DIFFICULTY TO COVER FOOD NEEDS

Monthly revised food SMEB price in LBP vs. Unofficial exchange rate

Source: WFP (2021). National FSSWG – Food Security and Markets Situation Analysis. FSSWG Meeting, 8 June 2021

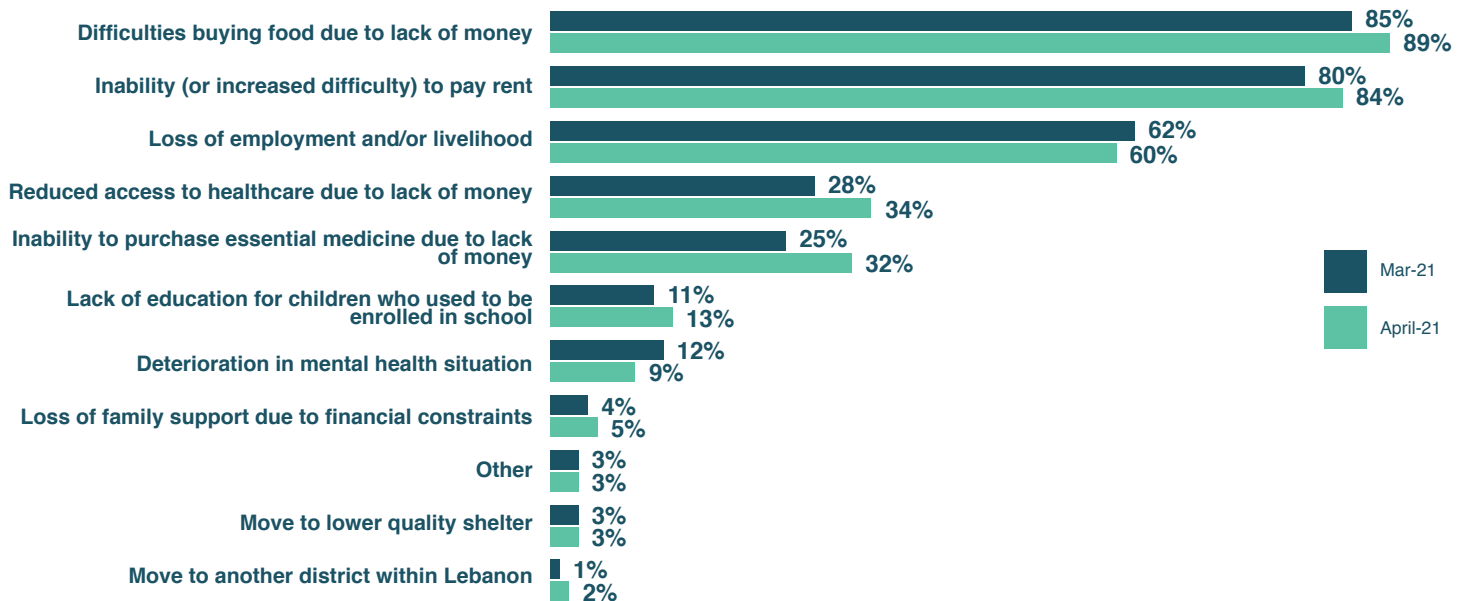


With a deteriorating economy, the value of the revised food Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)⁴ increased by 68% from January to May 2021 (139,138 LBP vs 234,316 LBP), following the developments of the informal exchange rate⁵. With such high prices, it is increasingly difficult for the most vulnerable to cover essential food needs. In April 2021, 89% of refugee households reported difficulties buying food due to lack of money (85% in March, compared to 83% in Q4 2020).⁶ This is negatively impacting the food security status of all vulnerable populations.

The UNDP/ARK Perceptions Survey (May 2021) found that three in five Lebanese respondents and four in five Syrians now say they are worried about food supplies. From mid-2019 to present, the risk of food insecurity amongst Lebanese has climbed rapidly. The percentage of Lebanese who worried ‘often’ or more frequently about ensuring that their household has enough money to buy food before their food supplies run out increasing by 31.3 % points, from 28.0% to 59.1%.

Impact of socio-economic situation on refugee households (Multiple answers possible, March and April 2021)

Source: UNHCR (2021). UNHCR Protection Monitoring – April 2021.



⁴ The SMEB expresses the monthly cost per capita to buy the minimum needed for physical survival.

⁵ WFP (2021). Lebanon VAM Update on Food Price and Market Trends. March 2021.

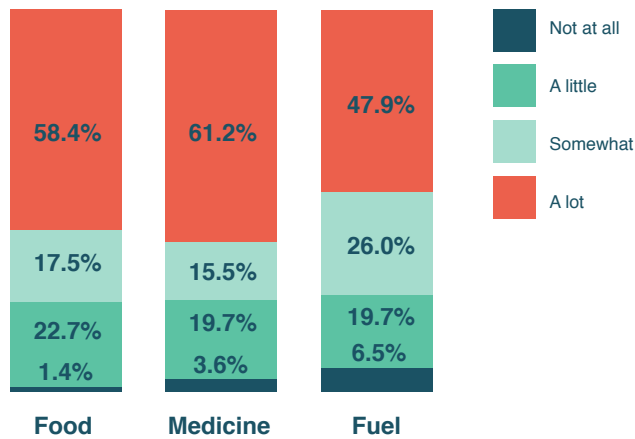
⁶ UNHCR (2021). UNHCR Protection Monitoring – April 2021.



Impact of removal of subsidies on vulnerable populations

Based on previous WFP analysis carried out in August 2020 and updated in April 2021 to assume a depreciation of LBP 15,000 per US\$ in the informal exchange rate market, the removal or reduction of subsidies is expected to have large inflationary repercussions on both the subsidized commodities, as well as the rest of the commodities and services in the market. The bread price could increase by 1.5 to 4.25 times, fuel prices by more than 5 times and the prices of medicines, medical equipment and infant formula by 326%.⁷

How much would you say you rely on each of the following subsidies to maintain your current quality of life?



Many people remain highly dependent on subsidies to meet their needs with more than 75% of respondents in the UNDP/ARK Survey stating that they rely on subsidies for food.⁸

Key Risks for People Supported Under the LCRP and the Operating Environment

- **Severe impact on access to adequate food**, further increasing the depth and breadth of food and nutrition insecurity in Lebanon.⁹
- **Discriminatory practices targeting refugees in accessing shops** including increasing food prices for beneficiaries, access restrictions on non-Lebanese, preventing non-Lebanese to enter shops before a certain time; requirement for proof of legal residency.
- **Demonstrations, protests and roadblocks taking place across the country.** Such incidents could trigger tensions but also lead to access issues for partners.
- **Tensions-related incidents in shops** or at fuel station with customers fighting over goods as witnessed during March and April.
- **Online tensions and antagonistic sentiments on social media** by Lebanese accusing Syrian refugees of benefiting and stocking subsidized goods, which could potentially lead to decreased protection space in the medium-term.

- **Increase in smuggling.** Syria-destined smuggling is increasingly blamed for the shortage of subsidized basic items. In addition, cross-border smuggling – and community attempts to stop it – will likely trigger a rise in inter-communal tensions and anti-refugee rhetoric (specifically against Syrians).

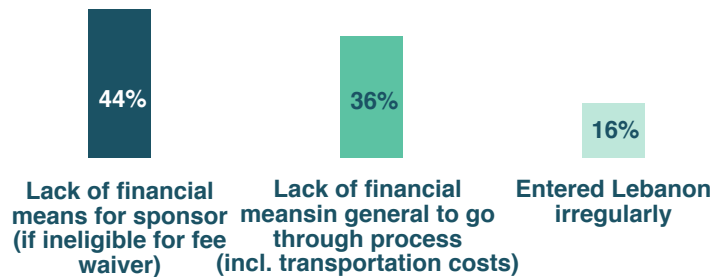
INCREASED PROTECTION RISKS

During Q1 2021, 18% of refugee households reported through protection monitoring that all of their members of 15 years or older had legal residency¹⁰, compared to 20% of households in Q4 2020.¹¹ This decline is consistent with the trends reported in the VASyR: only 20% of individuals 15 years or older reported having legal residency in 2020, 22% in 2019 and 27% in 2018.¹² Movement restrictions and General Security Office closures due to COVID-19 lockdowns likely contributed to difficulties for refugees to renew their residency during this period.

Refugees also reported that financial barriers remain a key constraint in accessing legal residency (both in relation to sponsorship and to cover costs associated with the residency process). This re-affirms the critical importance of an inclusive fee waiver for residency costs, especially in the current context.¹³

Main reasons why respondents reported not having legal residency

Source: UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.



During Q1, some 16% of Syrian refugees surveyed indicated that irregular entry was a barrier to legal residency and 12% were waiting for an appointment for housing attestation and/or certificate renewal. A growing number of refugees reported the lack of residency negatively impacting their ability to move freely (72%, up from 65% in Q4 2020), and to access livelihoods opportunities (33%, up from 21%).¹⁴

Eviction threats and evictions (individual and collective) remain a critical concern for refugees and migrants, mainly due to the inability to pay rent, but increasingly due to tensions with landlords and/or host communities.¹⁵ Regarding collective evictions, the UNHCR Collective Evictions Tracking Tool indicates a slight increase in Q1 in both collective eviction notices issued¹⁶ (38 compared to 35 in Q4 2020) and actual evictions (11 compared to 10 in Q4 2020).¹⁷ Field reports indicate that tensions over rent remain high, and some 10,501 individuals remain at risk of

⁷ WFP (2021). *Advocacy Note on the Impact of the Removal of Subsidies on Food Security, and Recommendations.* April 2021.

⁸ UNDP/ARK (2021). *Perception survey.* May 2021

⁹ For a full analysis, please refer to WFP (2021). *Advocacy Note on the Impact of the Removal of Subsidies on Food Security, and Recommendations.* April 2021.

¹⁰ UNHCR (2021). *Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.*

¹¹ UNHCR (2021). *Protection Monitoring Findings - 4th quarter 2020.*

¹² UNHCR/WFP/UNICEF (2021). *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR 2020).*

¹³ UNHCR (2021). *Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.*

¹⁴ UNHCR (2021). *Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.*

¹⁵ Inter-Agency (2021). *National Inter-Agency Meeting Presentation on April 16, 2021.*

¹⁶ "Collective" refers to evictions notices impacting five or more households.

¹⁷ UNHCR (2021). *UNHCR Collective Evictions and Eviction Notices Tracking tool (January – March 2021).*

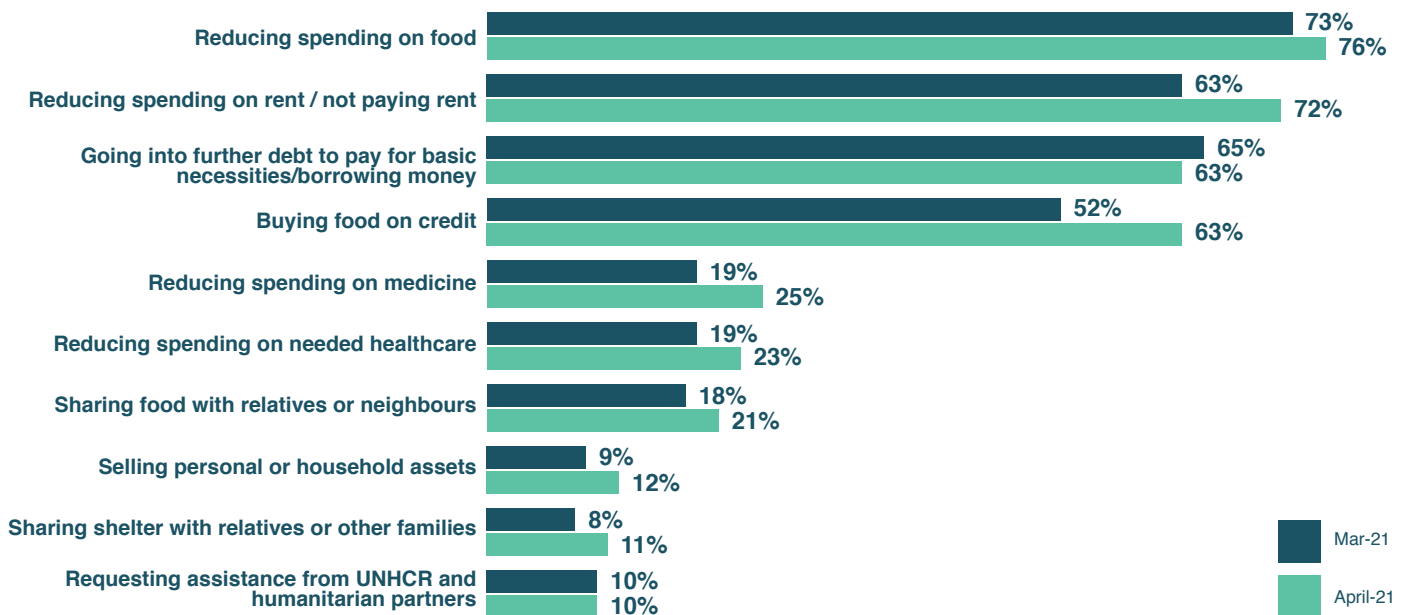


collective eviction, as well as tensions over relocation of evicted individuals to a new location i.e. the difficulty for refugees to find another shelter easily, or not being accepted by members of the new community.

Field reports indicate that movements of displaced Syrians from residential shelters to substandard non-residential units or informal settlements are ongoing¹⁸, which follows from the 58% of Syrian refugee families living in overcrowded shelters, shelters below humanitarian standards and/or shelters in danger of collapse reported in 2020¹⁹.

Harmful coping mechanisms are increasing across populations. As of April 2021, refugee households reported increasingly reducing food expenditure (76% in April, 73% in March, 66% in February), reducing spending on rent or not paying it (72% in April, 63% in March, 66% in February), and buying food on credit (63% in April, 52% in March, 39% in February).

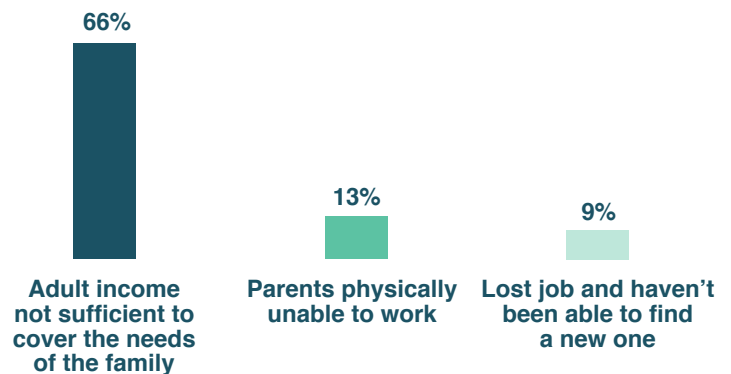
Most frequently reported harmful coping mechanisms among refugee households (Multiple answers possible, March and April 2021)



During Q1 2021, 3% of refugee households reported having at least one child engaged in child labour, citing financial necessity as the main driver.²⁰ Of those children engaged in child labour, 69% were not attending school. While 27% of them were not attending due to COVID-19 related school closures, the majority (62%) were not attending because their income was too important for the family. A recent study found a strong correlation between child labour and food insecurity: the inability to provide food is one of the of the main triggers for parents to send their children to work.²¹ Child protection partners now report child labour as the top community concern in all regions and the highest priority among reported child protection cases.²² At the same time, worryingly, the number of child protection partners identifying accessibility issues for children and their families to existing child protection services decreased substantially from 44% in January to 7% in March due to the strict countrywide lockdown, during which partners were only able to access to high-risk cases through case management. Prevention and community-based psychosocial support (PSS) activities were restricted during this period, which limited partners' capacity to identify vulnerable children within communities and refer those in need to child protection service.

Reasons for child labour

Source: UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.



¹⁸Inter-Agency (2021). 2021 1st Quarter sector dashboard: Shelter.

¹⁹ UNHCR/WFP/UNICEF (2021). Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR 2020).

²⁰ UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring Findings - 1st quarter 2021.

²¹ International Rescue Committee and Lebanon Protection Consortium (2021). Working Children in Crisis-Hit Lebanon: Exploring the Linkages between Food Insecurity and Child Labour.

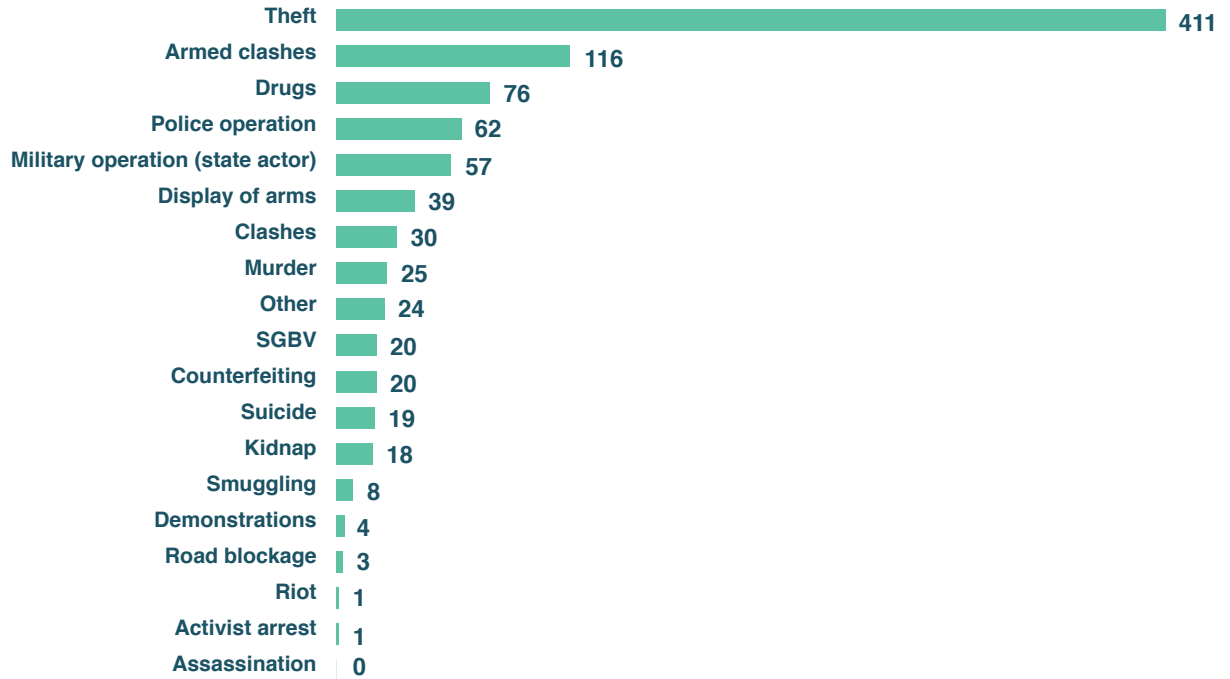
²² Child Protection Working Group Real Time Monitoring (RTM) Report, January – March 2021.

INCREASING SOCIAL TENSIONS

As the socio-economic situation continues to deteriorate, insecurity across the country is worsening. Social tensions continue to primarily manifest in community-level insecurity, which accounted for around 50% of the overall incidents reported from January to May. The most significant trend was the upward trajectory of theft, crime, and violence across Lebanon.

Community Insecurity Incidents: January – May 2021

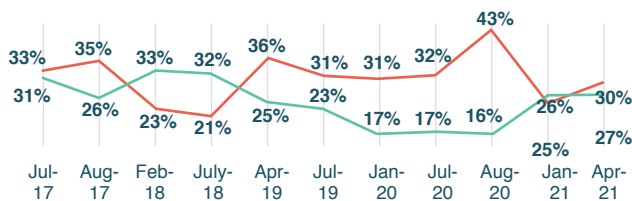
Source: Tension Monitoring System monthly mapping of tension-related incidents, 2021.



The deteriorating security situation is resulting in further strains on social stability, mainly in the North, Mount Lebanon, Akkar and Baalbek-El Hermel governorates. In addition, social distancing, curfews and other public health measures related to COVID-19, segregation between refugee and host-communities have been exacerbated, possibly impacting relations in the medium-term. While the amount of survey respondents reporting negative community relations between Lebanese and Syrians dropped from a high of 43.4% in the middle of 2020, to 24.5% in January 2021, this figure had risen again by May 2021 to 29.7%.

Quality of relations between Lebanese and Syrians (National)

Source: UNDP/ARK (2021). Perception survey. May 2021



Economic and labour tensions significantly increased in February. Most of these incidents were demonstrations and riots against the extension of lockdown measures. Access to jobs and income remains the primary driver of tensions. Recent tensions monitoring from May found that 52% of Lebanese and Syrian respondents cited job competition and 25% cited access to services and utilities as the primary reasons for inter-communal tensions. With the unemployment rate soaring to 40% and more than 60% of the country's youth unemployed,²³ tensions are expected to increase. Disputes between business owners/employers and employees related to labour, involving demands for salaries and benefits, are becoming more common.

The deteriorating situation is also leading to increased inability for vulnerable population to pay rent, causing tensions with landlords, coupled with increased concerns that landlords may begin requesting rental fees in US dollars which coincides with increased eviction threats as landlords begin to invest in their land instead of hosting informal settlements.

However, while a few Lebanese have engaged in acts of violence against Syrians, many more have demonstrated remarkable solidarity with the refugee community. As of March 2021, 15% of refugee households reported that they were aware that Lebanese neighbours supported refugee families during this time. However, this represents a decrease from 20% in February. The most frequently reported types of support provided: 46% agreeing to reduce rental fees or postpone payment, 36% helping to buy or share food, 25% allowing to buy on credit, 24% providing financial support and 23% providing psychological support.

²³ FAO (2020). GIEWS Country Brief: Lebanon. December 2020



REDUCED ACCESS TO SERVICES

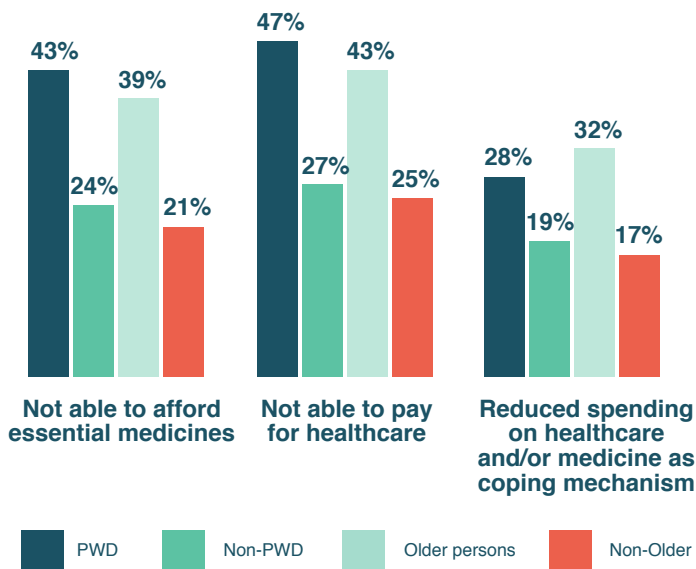
As of 31 May 2021, Lebanon had registered 540,388 COVID-19 cases and 7,729 deaths, which is equivalent to 1132 deaths per million of inhabitants, the highest rate in the MENA region.²⁴ Public health interventions are focusing on mitigation strategies and have included several lockdowns which have had a negative impact on vulnerable population's access to services.

Access to healthcare continues to be challenging for vulnerable populations, particularly for the most vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities and older persons. Many are unable to afford treatment, care and transportation to primary health care facilities and hospitals. Some are deterred by the COVID-19 threat. As a result, people are deprioritizing non-urgent health care including preventive primary healthcare. From the supply side, health care facilities are struggling as well to maintain their medical supply stocks and to prevent the high staff turnover that is affected by many of the healthcare workforce leaving the country due to the deteriorating socio-economic situation.

In March 2021, refugee households report that almost half of persons with disabilities (PWD) and older persons are unable to pay for healthcare, compared to around a quarter among the rest of the population. Around 4 in each 10 PWD and older persons are unable to afford essential medicines.²⁵

Effects on the health care of persons with disabilities (PWD) and older persons brought by the economic situation (March 2021)

Source: UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring March 2021. Presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on April 16, 2021



Due to an unexpected cut in funding, access to dialysis, and blood diseases support to displaced Syrians was hindered in the first quarter of 2021. The sector continues to advocate for this urgent and life-saving support.

²⁴ Roser, M., et al. (2021). "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)". Retrieved on 15 June 2021. NB: Limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death means that the number of confirmed cases and deaths is likely lower than the true number of cases and deaths from COVID-19.

²⁵ UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring March 2021. Presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on April 16, 2021

²⁶ Inter-Agency (2021). National Inter-Agency Meeting Presentation on April 16, 2021.

²⁷ UNHCR (2021). Protection Monitoring March 2021. Presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on April 16, 2021

²⁸ IMPACT platform (2021). COVID-19 Vaccine Data: Statistics and Breakdowns. Data shown for May 31st, 2021 (23:59pm).

Increasing mental health issues

Mental health issues such as depression and self-harm are reportedly increasing across populations. There is also a reported shortage in medicines for these cases. In March 2021, 26% of displaced Syrian adults experienced symptoms affecting their mental well-being, compared to 21% in February. This resulted in deteriorated physical health, inability to focus on daily functions, deteriorated relationships within the households, inability to properly care for family and oneself, suicide attempts including self-immolation and actual suicide, especially among refugees.²⁶ Regular protection updates reveal that suicidal ideation and threats of self-harm are continuing to rise throughout Lebanon. Most frequently reported causes for symptoms affecting mental health were the economic situation (98%), the COVID-19 situation (57%).²⁷

The compounded situation is affecting water service delivery in communities and informal settlements alike. At institutional level, due to the devaluation of the Lebanese Pound, the Water Establishments are facing difficulties in accessing spare parts and fuel for the pumping stations. At the same time, Water Establishments are receiving limited revenues from subscription's fees, due to public distrust. Civil unrest and lockdowns have delayed the implementation of WASH infrastructural and community mobilization activities.

In terms of access to education, additional difficulties are being faced in the delivery of remote learning due to the challenge of accessing to devices, internet and electricity for most students. This has caused a severe inequity in access, which is highlighted largely in the second shift schools where WhatsApp has been used as the main platform for e-learning.

COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy and impact on LCRP operations

As of May 31st, there were 1,526,600 individuals registered on the IMPACT platform (88% Lebanese, 10% non-Lebanese and 2% refugees with refugee cards). The total vaccines administered were 994,071, with 94% received by Lebanese, 5% by non-Lebanese (around 46,000) and 1% by refugees with refugee cards (almost 11,000).²⁸ Refugees in all locations remain hesitant to take the vaccine, mostly due to fear of side effects and lack of trust in its effectiveness, especially among persons with chronic illnesses and older persons. Reports indicate that vaccine and MoPH platform awareness among refugees has increased over Q1 due to awareness raising initiatives by outreach volunteers and social media initiatives; however, fear of data sharing persists. Refugees report concerns over perceived physical barriers to vaccine access, including fears around approaching hospitals in the North and Akkar; LAF checkpoints in Wadi Khaled and Aarsal; and concerns over physical challenges in BML and the North, such as disability and lack of caregiver. Refugees in the South report a perceived risk of being excluded from assistance. In BML and the Bekaa, refugees cite financial barriers, such as being unable to cover transportation costs to reach vaccination sites. As per perception monitoring done in May, 23.3% of Lebanese and 28.1% of Syrians mention that they are unlikely to accept being vaccinated. In particular, Baalbek El-Hermel, Akkar and some districts in the North have high vaccine hesitancy.